

## Absurdity in "Mahanatka"

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### ABSTRACT

Ramesh Prasad Panigrahi is a well-known face of Odia drama. He entered in literature as a poet. He has shown his skills in major fields such as stories, essays, novels, essays, criticism, etc. His contribution to the world of orthodox travel is no less. Through his drama, he has given a new style of drama to the Odia literature. He has experimented and applied a lot in the post-independence drama. Among the plays composed by him are 'Mukti Mandap', 'Mu Ambhe Amhemane', 'Dhrutarastrara akhi', 'Mahanataka', 'Gunda', 'Ananda Nagaraku jatra', hathi ku Homeopathy', etc. He was awarded by Odisha Sahitya Academy for his play 'Mahanatak'. It was first performed at Krishnachandra Gajapati medical college, Brahmapur under the name 'Panchamaswara'. 'Mahanataka' is the true manifestation of Indian political and social reality.

**KEYWORDS:** drama, absurdity in drama, nabanatyā andolan

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The range of literature is wide. Stories, novels, plays, poems, biographies are filled with these. Among them, the tradition of drama is very ancient. Modern drama was not as it is in ancient times. Just as language changes, drama changes itself over time. The change that took place in Western literature over time left its mark on the whole world. A lot of experiments have been applied mainly in the composition of drama known as 'Nabanatyā Andolan'. Due to this, many changes were made in the physical and spiritual aspects of the drama and the dramas were created with various new plot, themes and styles. Psychology, sexual consciousness, absurdity, expressionism, existentialism etc entered the drama. There are many discussions about 'Udbhat'(absurd) or 'Udbhat drama'. While some critics accept this play, others do not.

First let's talk about what is 'Udbhat'(absurd) or 'Udbhatata'(absurdity). "The English word for udbhata is 'absurd'. Which means inconsistent or unreasonable. Its dictionary meaning is inconsistent, unreasonable, or absurd, contrary to reason and tradition". "The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard used the word absurd in the 'modern' sense for the first time in world literature". The Encyclopedia America define the term 'absurd' – "Absurd is a term used originally to describe a violation of the rules of logic. It has acquired wide and diverse connotations in

modern theology, philosophy and the arts, in which it expresses the failure of traditional values to fulfill man's spiritual and emotional needs".

This absurdity has entered the odia literature from western literature. "The dramatic elements such as plot, character, dialogue, conflict, tension, etc are absent in the tradition of absurd drama". This phrase is accepted by many critics and some do not. Because there are many plays written in which all these elements are fulfilled but many plays are not. It is written in which there is no innovation to some extent, but in this sense we can also classify 'Mahanataka' in the range of criticism.

Mahanatak is a freelance drama. It uses the 'daskathia' style of folk drama. The plot of the play is the introduction of a dictatorship by the main character bajrabahu and the self-destruction of his vices. Although written on the basis of political satire and social reality, there are descriptions of many absurdity issues. king Bajrabahu is an absurd ruler. He think 'heis the equivalent of Devaraj Indra'. He think that he is great and liked king. Despite all the problems and oppression in his country, he thinks that socialism has been established. Minister Brahmadatta is accompanied by a huge water-filled pot of water in his hand when bajrabahu enters the stage. The king looks at this water-filled sculpture during a political

trial and laughs like a donkey. He comes back to the stage in a dog pulled chariot, which no king has ever done or will ever do. It creates a sense of humor in the mind.

A prime example of absurdity can be found During the praise of the emperor, minister Sheelabhadra is specially employed to describe the virtues of the emperor. As soon as he enters the stage, he sings the praises of the king and says – “bira shree birabara prabala parakrami samrat bajrabahu. K.C.I.E, B.L; PADMABHUSAN, PARAMVEERCHAKRA, PH.D; M, M.S; M.B.B.S; SABHAPATI, IAF; PRATISTHATA, BISHWESWAR MANDIR; SAMPADAKA; ICS nka JAYA HEU”. All the adjectives used here are useless because the king is very ancient and these adjectives cannot be found in his time.

At the beginning of the play, two characters enter the stage playing daskathi (music instrument). King bajrabahu and his state management are extolling the vastness of the absurdity-

“Eniki shasan heba pramoda shalare  
Rati hele rajakarya shoibe dinare  
Kshyiripitha bhasuachhi nalare nalare  
Rasagola manankara pahada rastare.”

While managing the state, the problems of the leaders of different states and their solutions are also strange. The Landlord of Karnat came and expressed his problem to King bajrabahu that - "There is a problem in Karnat. He feels strongly that the country does not need two hands and two legs. There is no peaceful coexistence among them. That is why they are cutting off each other's hands and feet." As a solution bajrabahu is supporting this and has called for cutting off the hands and feet of Karnat landlords. He also said that the severed hands and feet should be buried in the place where they were cut. This will create a beautiful crop of hands and feet and it shall be kept in store, so that the disaffected hands and officers may be supplied where necessary. The second comer is landlord of Gouda. His problem was that the fish of the kingdom had disappeared from the pond and turned into virgins due to magic. As a solution, the king said that all the girls of Gouda land should be drowned in the river so that they will become fish. Apart from this, punishing sun, punishing nature, punishing water, creating raspberry hills, punishing rivers for floods, building sky roofs and ordering disciples and teacher to add bricks and stones for this. Also dealing with Shrugalsen for business of wit is a strange issue. King bajrabahu orders the commander to bring all the kingdom's wit and offer a new sun in return. Because good light is not coming from the old

sun. Apart from this, order to flood. These are strange and absurd thinking.

Another example of this wonder comes from this play. The dead people who lost their lives due to various natural calamities during bajrabahu's reign are the characters of the play. In any realistic drama, it is not possible for the dead to become character. The conversation between the dead man and the king bajrabahu is as follows -

“bajrabahu - Are you that dead Human?  
Dead man - I do not understand anything!  
bajrabahu - I ask you are the dead person?  
Dead Man - Yes, but I don't recognize you.  
bajrabahu - Amaty! It is very surprising how this dead

person does not recognize the powerful emperor Brajbahu of Hastinanagar.

During this conversation, King bajrabahu became angry and ordered the execution of the dead person. The revolution of these dead people in the last stage is another amazing event.

Queen Ketkigandha is one of the main characters of the play. He is a helpless character in this play. She is deprived of the glory of motherhood. Because the king is the eunuch. Even the queen cannot dream because of king. So the Queen decided buying a dream from Avanti Sadhaka and giving a free heart in exchange for it. From Avanti Sadhaka's voice comes -

“Abanti nagarara jane samanya sadhaka;  
swapna bikri  
pesha mora  
Sparshe mo tangara bhui shyamalangi hue  
Marubhumi gai uthe madira malhara  
Mo sparshare padma phute puskarini neere  
Mu chhuile ange ange kauri sihare  
Pallabita hue kete lalita romancha  
Brukshyasama snigdha chhaya puspasama  
madhu  
bitarana  
Mora byabasaya.  
Mulya kintu tara bimukta hrudaya.”

Although all the topics written above are funny or weird, the playwright Ramesh Prasad Panigahri has successfully and consciously applied Indian political satire and social reality. No such drama has been composed in the odia literature which has no completely absurdity. What we see in Western literature. Like Samuel Beckett's 'waiting for godot'. So in the end it can be said that 'Mahanataka' is not

entirely an absurd play, but it is absurdity in many aspects.

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